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Shark-Like Fossil Found In Elko

Carlo, Romano

Abstract: When you think of wildlife in Nevada, sharks don't usually come to mind. But shark-like creatures were here, 250 million years ago, when the continents were still one, and the region was covered in water. A surprising discovery was made in Elko recently. Carlo Romano of the University of Zurich in Switzerland led the project. "It looked quite different from modern day bony fish," Romano told KNPR's State of Nevada, "Bony fish are fishes like the pike or tuna. It didn't look like them. It looked more like a shark." He said the jaws of the animal, which has been named *Birgeria americana*, was about a fifth of the total length of the animal. Its size, which is estimated to have been about six feet long, and carnivorous nature is exactly why it is important, Romano explained.

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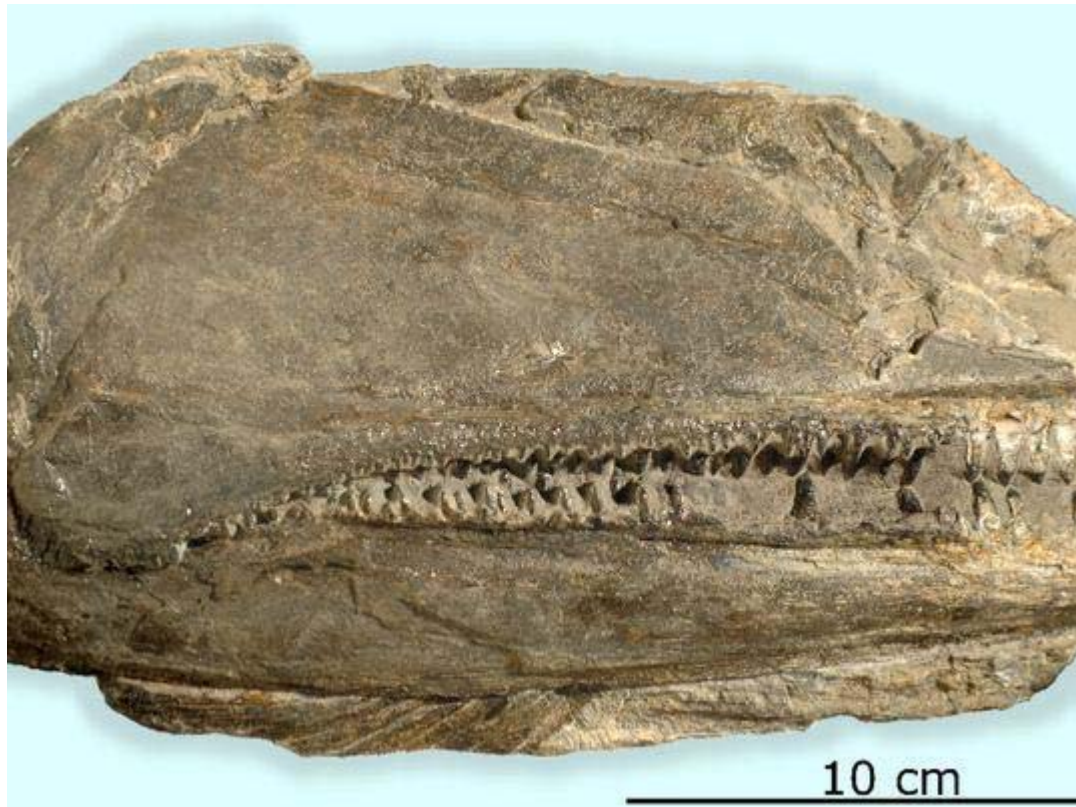
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Shark-Like Fossil Found In Elko

*Courtesy University of Zurich***LISTEN** (6:59)

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Aug 14, 2017 by *Kristy Totten*

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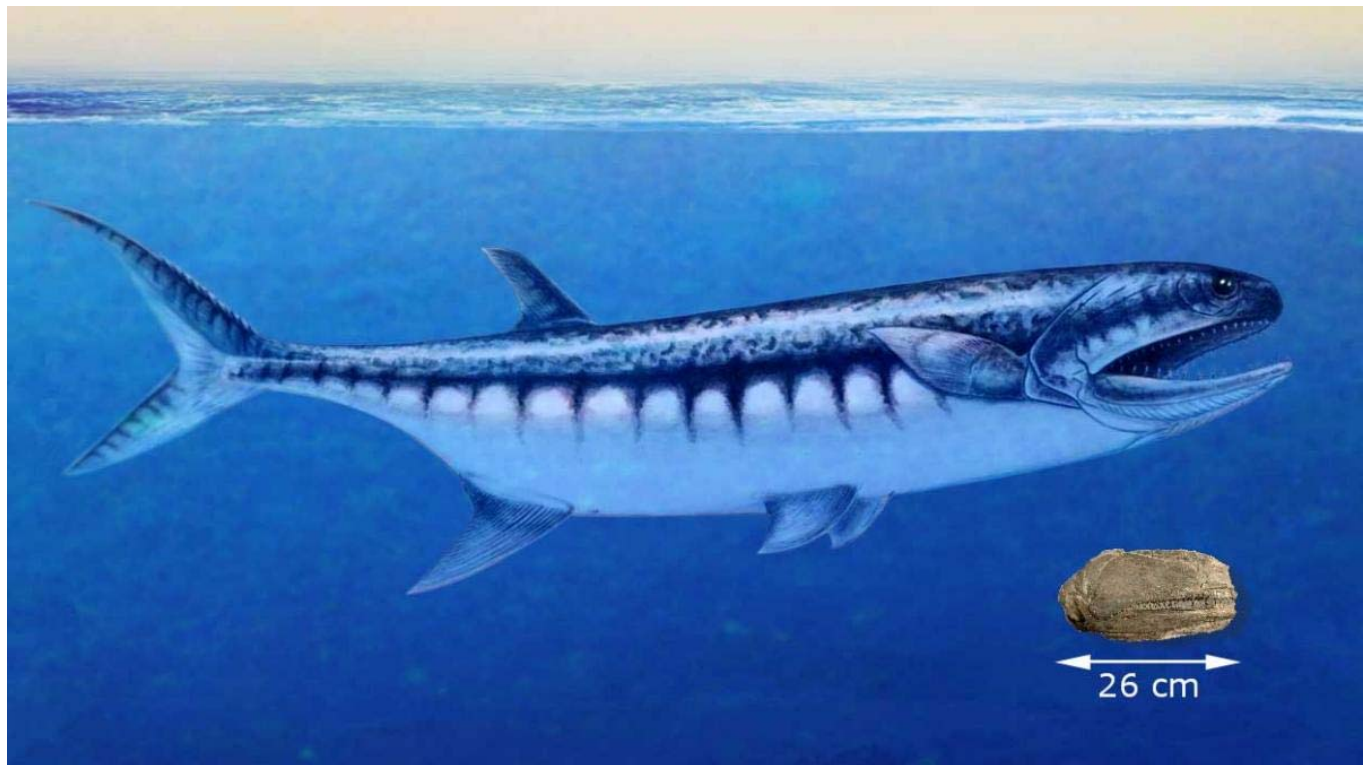
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Vaiden, R.C., 2004, *Plate tectonics: Mysteries solved!* Champaign, Illinois State Geological Survey, *Geobit* 10.

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An artist's reconstruction of Birgeria americana/artwork by Nadine Bösch

Scientists have long thought that after the earth's third mass extinction it was far too hot near the equator, which is where current-day Nevada was located, for a large predator to live.

"But the fossils from Elko now question these previous interpretations," he said, "This find is important because it is one of the predator animals found or known after the mass extinction event."

Romano said there are very few samples of invertebrates from that time period

and from that location in the fossil record.

The fossil is being scanned in hopes of finding out more information about it and eventually it will be turned over to the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science.

Support comes from

Guests: Carlo Romano, paleontologist, University of Zurich

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